

CHALLENGE



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FIGHTING ON THE ROAD TO WORKERS' POWER



We need to commute away from dead-end labor struggles that are limited by reformism, and instead fight for communism. Power to the working class is our final destination.

CHICAGO, June 25—A multiracial group of over a dozen Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) workers and supporters rallied at a busy station today for a spirited “Hour of Power” demonstration. We are fighting for equal pay for equal work, rights and benefits for the growing ranks of part-time CTA workers and to organize more workers to fight the sellout union misleaders of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU). Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members are also fighting for the idea that workers can run all of society without profiteering bosses and their puppet politicians. That’s communism—working class power.

We rallied near a busy transit stop and then marched down the streets to the Howard Street maintenance shop where workers leaned over the concrete wall to check us out. They discussed the rally all day. More people discussed the need to strike. As we were wrapping up our rally in a nearby park one of the women workers said, “We should do this again next week!” Later, another worker said she was proud to be there.

A bus driver and a rail mechanic have organized two previous rallies, but this was the largest one. Black women workers, who make up the larg-

est group of lower-paid, part-time workers have added militant leadership to this fight! Their leadership has clarified how the workers, armed with class-conscious politics can and will overcome the bosses’ efforts to divide us. Through our own experience fighting back, the class struggle becomes illuminated. We see that capitalism needs racism and sexism to exist, so we can only smash these inequalities by smashing capitalism.

Members of the international PLP have been at all three rallies selling CHALLENGE, handing out fliers and leading chants. We are helping to create opportunities for the Party to grow and to spread communist ideas among more workers.

Reject all capitalist misleaders, steer towards communism

The CTA and the ATU use the part-timer workers for the money they save the company and the dues they pay the union. Many of them are part of the so-called “Second Chance” program, meaning that they have previously been deemed guilty by the bosses’ racist injustice system for non-violent offenses.

Under this label, the transit bosses try to

rationalize a higher rate of exploitation that is inherently racist. The rank-and-file union members in fact voted down this program during negotiations around five years ago, only for the union hacks to turn around and still include it in the contract! For this, we have included in our demands that all CTA workers be offered full-time positions to push back against their divide-and-conquer attacks.

What’s more, the union mis-leadership wants us to rely on the politicians, but these ruling-class parasites will never serve our needs. Decades of relying on the liberal bosses in Chicago has led to nothing for workers here but evictions, layoffs, closed hospitals and schools, and racist police terror.

More union members are beginning to believe that it is the international working class who has the power to fight back against the politicians, bankers and billionaires. After all, it was our class that has kept the world running as we risked our lives during this deadly pandemic. We have the potential to create a worker-led communist society that abolishes racism and money and puts our needs first!

Board the train to workers’ power

All workers, part-time and full-time, are seeing our paychecks shrink as the cost of living continues to rise. The CTA and the ATU have worked overtime to create divisions among the membership. As a consequence of their efforts some full-timers unfortunately have been won to believe that the part-time workers don’t really have it so bad. But all workers – part-time or full-time, employed or unemployed—can do so much better than what this racist, sexist profit system has to offer!

The struggle in front of us is difficult, but what we do today counts. Rank-and-file organizing and arming the working class with communist politics and a fighting mass PLP will slowly but surely build the revolutionary movement that finally buries the bosses and their rotten system. Board the train to workers’ power – Join PLP!✊

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

- ★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.
- ★The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.
- ★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.
- ★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.
- ★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.
- ★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

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Editorial

Capitalist infrastructure murders workers; U.S. imperialism crumbles

On June 24, capitalism killed an untold number of people in Surfside, Florida, when a high-rise apartment complex fell without warning. Dozens of bodies have been recovered from what used to be Champlain Towers South; more than 100 people remain unaccounted for. According to the New York Times, it may be “the deadliest accidental building collapse in American history” (6/27).

But what happened to these Florida condominiums was no accident. It was the result of a system that values profit over workers’ lives. It exposed a United States in decline, where a divided ruling class has neglected basic infrastructure for decades. The world’s wealthiest “developed nation” is a mess of crumbling roads and bridges, asbestos-ridden school buildings, and toxic public water systems. And while the capitalist bosses cheat and steal and dodge paying taxes, the working class pays the price—often with our lives.

The main wing of the U.S. ruling class, the finance capitalists represented by the Joe Biden administration, knows it needs to raise taxes on corporations and the wealthy to prepare for inter-imperialist war with an increasingly aggressive China. But the main wing lacks leadership, unity, and a general willingness to sacrifice their own shorter-term gains for the long-term interests of their class. They’re also facing stiff resistance from the isolationist wing led by ex-president Donald Trump and domestic capitalists like the Koch, Mercer, and DeVos families. To get the war budget they need, they’ll need to impose more open fascism against any bosses who refuse to get on board. To get the soldiers they need to fight and die for their failing empire, they’ll need to do the same against the working class.

Capitalism cannot protect the working class—not from the next infrastructure disaster, not from the next bloody global conflict. Workers will never be secure until we smash capitalism with communist revolution. Only communism—a society without money, exploitation, racism, and sexism—will put workers’ lives first. Only a state run by and for the working class can guarantee that all workers will have safe and decent shelter, just as communists did in the past (*see housing article, page 3*). Under communism, we will use our collective power to meet the needs of the working class.

Workers pay for capitalist decay

As investigators sort through the rubble, there is no shortage of theories on what caused the building to fall: design flaws, shoddy construction, lax building codes, erratic code enforcement. A New York Times report pointed to malfeasance by a negligent city inspector (7/1). A class action suit has accused the Champlain condo association of “reckless and negligent conduct” for ignoring years-old reports of major damage to the building’s concrete structure (CNN 6/29). In an area vulnerable to hurricane winds and corrosive salt-water, capitalist over-development may also have contributed to the collapse. In 2019, a member of the condo board expressed concerns that heavy construction next door may have damaged the Champlain structure. Surfside officials ignored him (NYT, 6/27). That’s a typical response in cities

that are dominated by contractors and real estate interests—basically Anytown, U.S.A.

The tragedy in Florida is no isolated event. In Puerto Rico, schools are in danger of collapse from earthquakes. In New York and New Jersey, the Hudson River tunnels have yet to be repaired, nearly nine years after Hurricane Sandy (Wall Street Journal, 4/2). From Newark to Flint, Michigan, more than 5 million people get their drinking water “from systems that exceeded the Environmental Protection Agency’s lead action level of 15 parts per billion” (theatlantic.com, 9/11/19).

Death and taxes

The decay and destruction of capitalism trickles from the top down. Biden’s “compromise” infrastructure bill—already cut from \$2.3 trillion to \$579 billion in new spending—reflects both the split in the U.S. ruling class and the bosses’ drive toward war. Biden has pushed to raise the corporate tax rate from 21 percent to 28 percent (msn.com, 6/13).

As the U.S. president fake cries in Florida, he’s proposing to use taxes stolen from workers to fund \$753 billion for U.S. military “defense.” That’s two percent more than the previous year’s budget, even “as the Biden administration pulls the nation out of the U.S. military’s longest war [in Afghanistan] and shifts focus away from the Middle East to address emerging threats from China” (cnbc.com, 5/28). But none of these measures will give the finance capitalists anything close to what they need both to repair critical infrastructure and prepare for conflict with China.

On June 12, Biden and other imperialist leaders from the G7 (*see editorial from 7/7*) launched their Build Back Better World (B3W) partnership, a strategy to compete with China by meeting the “tremendous infrastructure needs of low- and middle-income countries” (whitehouse.gov, 6/12). This “unified vision” is aimed to “create new opportunities to demonstrate U.S. competitiveness abroad and create jobs at home”—code for intimidating rival imperialists while unifying the U.S. working class in a patriotic war drive.

There is a long history of infrastructure projects that were ultimately geared toward military dominance. As reported by the Center for American Progress, the largest U.S. government investments of the 20th century include the Panama Canal, Ellis Island, the Marshall Plan, the Interstate Highway System, and the Apollo space program. From generating cheap labor to occupying strategic territory to bribing essential ruling-class allies, all of them were driven by the bosses’ agenda to reinforce their economic and military dominance.

Fight for communism!

This tragedy in Florida is a material reflection of the sharpening contradictions of capitalism. The future of our class depends on workers’ ability to see through the manipulations of the Big Fascist finance capitalists and their phony “solutions” to the problems generated by the profit system. We in Progressive Labor Party must continue to lead the march toward communist revolution and a society that is built for a safe and decent life for the working class. Join PLP!🇸🇶

Retired, not expired!

Workers protest sickening healthcare system



New York City, June 30—Over 200 angry retired New York City workers demonstrated in over 95 degree heat in the continuing effort to stop the privatization of their Medicare health insurance (see CHALLENGE, 6/23). Members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) have been actively building this fight for decades. It was heartening to see marchers whose average age was certainly over 70 fighting back. We may be retired but we haven't expired!

Under capitalism, decent health care is not guaranteed to all workers. The health benefits which current and former workers in this city have

fought for are being eroded and the costs for these benefits are being borne more and more by us retirees. This means higher copays for medical appointments and prescription drugs and more narrow health care choices. The cuts we face today are part of a slippery slope of cutbacks faced by workers around the world that have everything to do with the intensifying rivalry between the world's top capitalist powers. Chinese and Russian imperialists are challenging the U.S. empire everywhere. There's the Chinese space station and the Russian cyber attacks. There's growing Russian influence in the Middle East and Chinese economic expansion

all over Africa and Latin America. As the U.S. capitalists gear up for war, the governments that they control have less and less money for worker's needs such as health care.

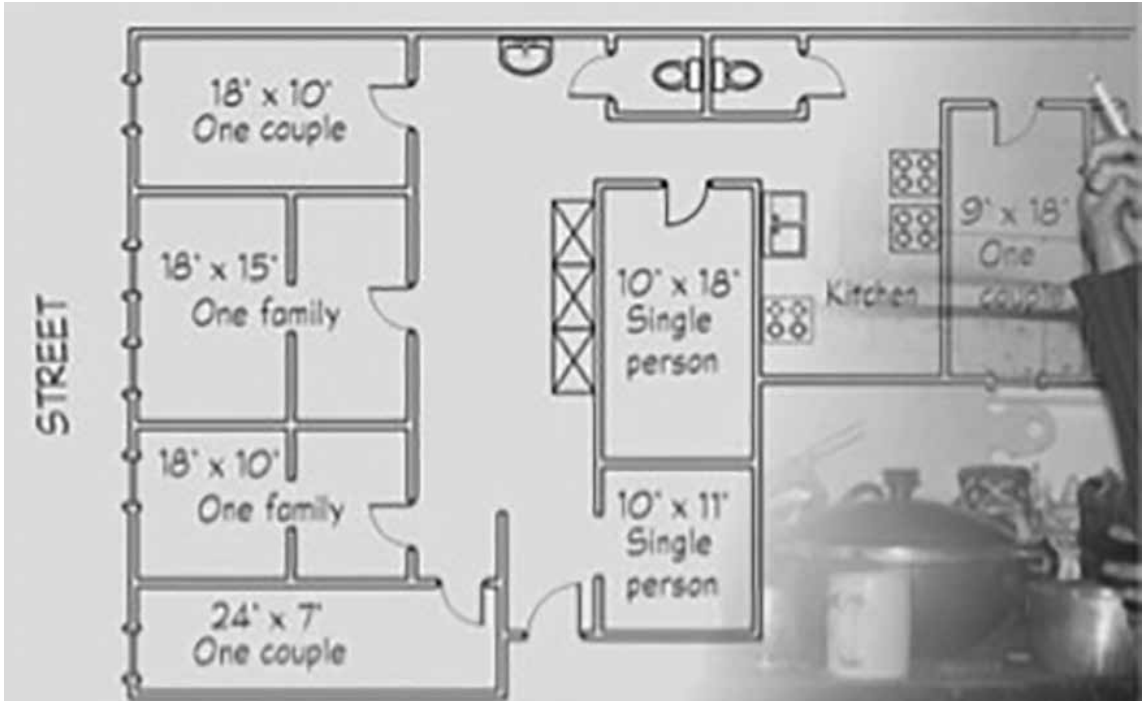
Capitalist inequality and racism has been highlighted through the many struggles around racist police murders and the inequalities pushed front and center by the Covid-19 crisis. Lower paid New York City workers who are disproportionately Black and Latin will be the hardest hit by the health care changes. The \$1,500 maximum annual copays per person will certainly be more difficult to afford for a retired school crossing guard whose pension plus social security may be less than \$10,000 than a retired city manager whose income is likely at least 10 times as much.

Starting in the financial district of New York, we marched to several union headquarters and the city's office of labor relations on our way to city hall. This route underlined the partnership of union misleaders and city bosses in orchestrating this attack on our health care. Their partnership is based on shared support of the capitalist system. Union sellouts use their clout to steer working-class anger away from direct struggles like strikes and into the arms of politicians who are mere puppets of the capitalist state. The capitalist bosses and their politician puppets have all got to go. Workers have to go from protesting to actually running society. That means working class power - communism.

Today's demonstration, confrontations of misleaders at union meetings, and an online petition which over 23,000 workers have signed point to the anger and struggle that are alive and kicking. Capitalism, however, which needs inequality and racism to exist, will never provide a decent life for all workers. That is why Progressive Labor Party is organizing to end capitalism and create a communist society that will serve the needs of all workers.✪

History of Soviet Housing

Collectivity, not profit, is the foundation



It is widely if not explicitly acknowledged that profit motive lies behind the evolving horror of the Miami condo collapse (see editorial, page 2). The evidence is incontrovertible: cost-cutting in both building materials and building maintenance are to blame. The apparently inescapable reach of profit-driven tragedy leaves any decent person feeling sickened and perhaps even defeated.

Readers of CHALLENGE deserve to know—what would housing be like under communism?

Building from ashes

For starters, we must be real: Following the devastation of world war and armed revolution, housing would be scarce. Revolutionary workers will inherit the wreckage that is housing under capitalism, where even in peacetime, a great portion of the population is left poorly housed or unhoused. Revolution emerging from the ashes of war will compound that challenge.

In socialist Cuba the Urban Reform Law of 1960 abolished the collection of rent by landlords.

During Joseph Stalin's time, the main form of

Soviet housing in cities was the communal apartment, known as Kommunalkas. Every unit—single, couple, or family—had a room, size varied by family, with shared kitchens and bathrooms (see diagram). This was due to a great housing shortage at the time of the Revolution and thereafter.

But this was also a society where EVERYONE had access to a roof over their head, a kitchen and a bathroom. Abolition of homelessness was the core principle, not profit maximization. This interview captures how Soviet workers experienced communal living conditions.

A: How many years would you say you have spent in kommunalkas?

B : All my life. All my life. I was born in a kommunalka. Of course there we had a three-family apartment, and then I lived on Petr Lavrov Street, there were nine tenants, and here there are 11. So, my whole life.

A: And every time a bigger one.

B : Yes, yes, my whole life.

A: I see. And where is it better to live, in a new district in your own little apartment or despite everything?

B : Yes, I like living here very much.

A: Since the film won't have my question, you should answer in a full sentence. Is it better to live in a kommunalka in the center of the city than in a private apartment in a new district?

B : It's better to live in a communal apartment, a large one, in this kind of, in a historic district, a

Continued on page 6

Pride Month

Smash rainbow capitalism, fly red flag high



New York City, June 26—There is an opportunity for growing class consciousness in the fight against anti-gay and anti-trans sexism. The Pride events this year had slogans against “Rainbow Capitalism.” We need to take it one more step further. Yes, the Republican Party is racist and sexist, but it’s the Democratic Party that’s doubled down on winning LGBTQ+ workers to support its imperialist agenda through promises of legislation.

Unless we get rid of this capitalist profit system, built off of exploitation and division, no worker can achieve liberation. Only by building an international communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) dedicated to fighting for armed revolution, can we make working-class liberation a reality!

For the third year in a row, thousands of people here took to the streets with the Queer Liberation March, many in opposition of the larger Pride Parade’s embrace of corporations, politicians, and racist and sexist police. PLP members joined other workers and students to support this struggle and share our communist ideas.

We distributed over 100 leaflets and dozens of CHALLENGEs. PLP members led chants that called on all workers to “flush the system down the drain!” and spell out the racist nature of the police. In school-based Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) where we have provided leadership, we worked to ensure that such spaces are not simply supportive of students but also critical of the capitalist system that is racist and sexist to the core.

The fight in this movement is the same as all others—reject identity politics, expose the liberal racists and their imperialist agenda, and recruit fighters to the international battle for communist revolution via PLP.

Fighting racism and sexism in the movement is key

The LGBTQ+ movement is infested with racism and anti-worker ideology. However, the roots of Pride originate in rebellion against the cops. The cops who murder Black and Latin workers are the same cops that terrorize gay and trans workers. Black and Latin transgender workers still face more police harassment, terror and incarceration than other LGBTQ+ workers. Blood remains on the hands of the state for the death of Layleen Xtravaganza Cubilette-Polanco who died while in custody at Rikers Island as corrections officers stood by laughing.

In 1969, rebellions erupted against the police who raided the Stone wall Inn Bar and terrorized the Black and Latin transgender, gay, and lesbian patrons. This was the origin of June Pride actions. Stonewall came at a time when a huge part of the population was already out protesting and challenging capitalism. However, with the fall of the old communist movement, there was a political vacuum, which identity politics filled. Out came single-issue, identity-based organizations. We fought in the streets, challenged the cops, but the emphasis on how capitalism oppresses all workers was all gone.

That explains how today’s Pride events have become a capitalist celebration that disregards the fact that exploitation is the foundation of this profit system. All Pride events, including the Brooklyn Liberation Action for Trans Youth, which drew over a thousand protesters, play into the pockets of the liberal bosses. Actions divorced from the class struggle do not challenge capitalism; it negotiates with capitalism.

Under capitalism, the mode of production is based on the exploitative relationship of wage labor. As more people were able to live outside of a reproductive family unit, the possibilities of constructing a life, an identity, a community outside

Dividing and super-exploiting the working class

Capitalists and their politicians maximize profits and maintain their power by dividing and super-exploiting workers. Bosses want workers to blame each other for a system that has never met the needs of our class. The failures of the system are especially true for groups of workers the system super-exploits. Bosses pay less to Black, Latin, immigrant, women, gay, transgender, and other groups of workers that are terrorized by the system. Whether the agents of terror are racist cops, ICE officers, or bigoted workers convinced to turn on their class siblings, the capitalists at the top maintain control.

A 2013–15 National Health Interview Survey found that gay male workers earn 10 percent less than their heterosexual counterpart. In more than half the U.S., LGBTQ+ workers can be openly fired because of their sexuality or gender identity. The National Transgender Discrimination Survey reported, that trans people are twice as likely to be unemployed due to discrimination. It’s estimated that about seven percent of youth in the United States are LGBTQ+, while 40 percent of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ+.

LGBTQ+ workers also face attacks in the realm of healthcare. In an online survey, 65 percent of doctors heard negative comments from peers targeting LGBTQ+ patients, while 35 percent witnessed discrimination toward individuals in the workplace. The rate of HIV/AIDS has recently reached staggering numbers, especially in some sections of the LGBTQ+ community. One in two Black gay men or transwomen will contract HIV in their lifetime. This is due to a sexist and racist healthcare system.

of traditional gender roles and straight sexualities grew. Today, capitalism has accommodated elements of gay, queer, and trans existence. But for any member of the working class to live full free lives, we need to abolish this dictatorship based on exploitation and profit.

Liberals = still main danger

As conservative politicians openly attack LGBTQ+, Black, and immigrant workers, liberal politicians claim they support equality—equal oppression, that is. Rainbow capitalism is not only about corporations profiting off LGBTQ+ workers; it is also in effect when opportunist politicians use language of “inclusivity” and “representation” to drum up support for imperialist wars and pro-boss laws (like zoning for luxury condos that helps drive homelessness).

Transgender pilots dropping bombs on workers in Iraq is not liberation!

Openly gay or lesbian politicians—like Democrat Mayor Lori Lightfoot in Chicago—protecting the police while attacking teachers and students is not liberation!

It is just more capitalist exploitation.

PLP fights for communism, a system designed to meet the needs of all workers based upon equality. The fight against racism and sexism, which includes anti-LGBTQ+ oppression, must be at the center of building a communist world. We have a long way to go in overcoming identity politics, nationalism and pro-democracy ideology. The bosses’ ideas are rampant in many Pride activities, all of which keep the working class more divided.

To smash capitalism we need a communist movement that unites workers across socially-constructed lines of race, gender, and sexuality. Only a movement that unites all sections of the working-class—under the leadership of those workers most familiar with the rotten nature of the system—can succeed. Read CHALLENGE and join PLP!✊

Book Review of ‘Salt of the Earth’

Workers’ spirit honored through a red lens

Whose neck shall I stand on to make me feel superior; and what will I have out of it? I don't want anything lower than I am. I am low enough already. I want to rise and to push everything up with me as I go.

These are the words of Rosaura Quintero, a working-class woman, zinc miner's wife and one of the central characters in Herbert Biberman's film *Salt of the Earth* (1954). Based on a true story the film, which captures the valiant struggle of zinc miners on strike and the leadership of their wives, contains powerful lessons about the power of anti-sexist and anti-racist class fightback against the exploitive mining industry. However, few know the dramatic struggle that was waged to make the movie and to show it to broader audiences. That relatively unknown struggle is also the subject of Biberman's book *Salt of the Earth: The Story of a Film*.

The book reveals that *Salt of the Earth*, finished in 1953, was made by film workers who were blacklisted during the McCarthy era witch hunt due to their pro-communist politics or affiliations. The Hollywood film industry, not content with driving these workers out of jobs, did everything it could to stop *Salt of the Earth*. Despite the film's radical working-class politics and the film maker's ties to communism, both works conceal the most important lesson for the working class: workers need communism in order to rise above the misery of capitalism as Rosaura's quote poignantly illuminates.

The story of getting this film made is ably told by Herbert Biberman, one of the Hollywood Ten sentenced to jail for refusing to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Hollywood began by refusing to give Biberman's Independent Productions Corporation (IPC) a union crew. This was done through Roy Brewer, International Representative of the stage workers union (IATSE). Brewer built his entire career as a professional anticommunist in the labor movement (the Wikipedia article on him makes this crystal clear).

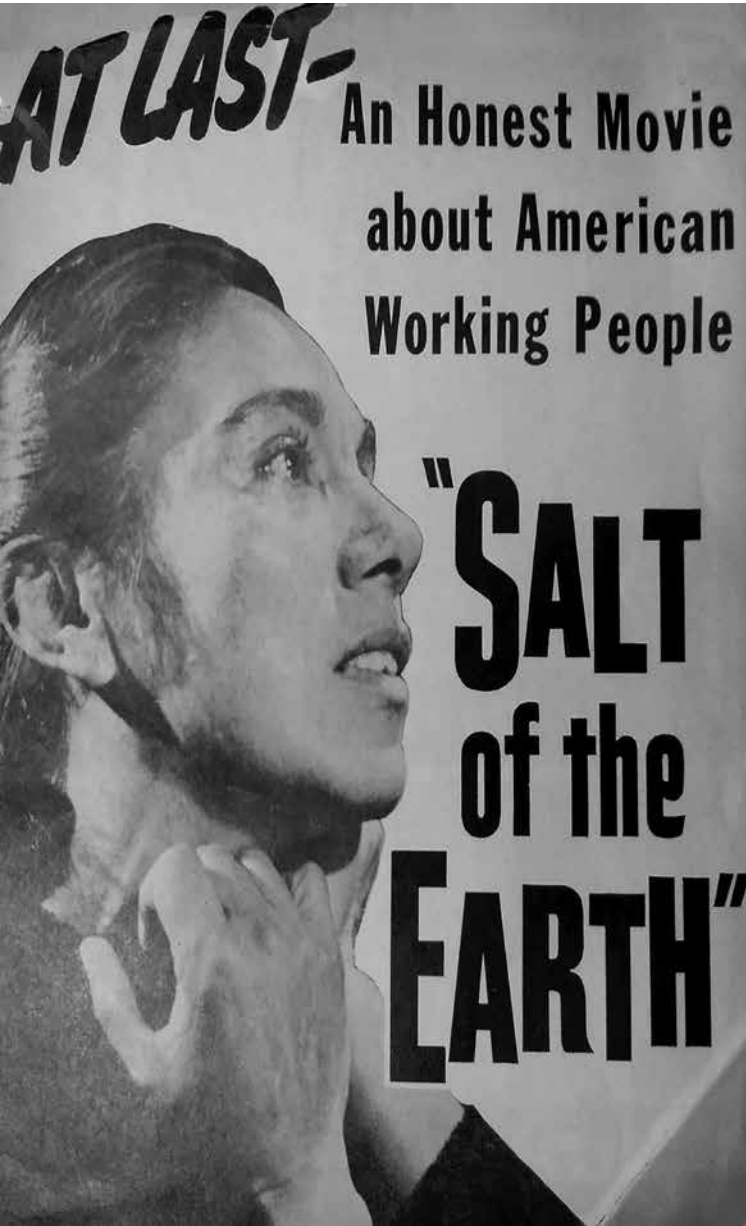
When IPC got a union crew anyway, Hollywood got Congressman Donald Jackson to denounce the filmmaking, starting an intense campaign to stop it. The lab that had developed the film refused to finish the job. In addition, armed vigilantes made their appearance, as Biberman describes:

From the other side of the ranch house a shot was fired. But it was not our guard; it was too far away. We waited. Another shot was heard coming from what seemed to be our side of the gully.

Besides describing the courageous struggle of individual miners and filmmakers at the height of McCarthyism, this book also shows how the rotten politics, infected with reformism and landslides back into capitalism, of the old Communist Party led to the sellout of our class struggle.

For example, the only thing Biberman and the leaders of the miners union could think to do was call in the state police and dissolve in slobbering praise to the independent businessman who stand up to monopoly capitalism, like this:

America's chances for a democratic future were indeed good. America possessed one very meaningful attribute. It was so diverse in the composition of its human inhabitants . . . It also possessed businessmen who believed business was a way of making a living and not a cider-press to squeeze sovereignty out of a people. And it had a few businessmen who were



At last– an honest movie that shows real antiracist, antisexist class struggle—the ingredients needed to defeat capitalism.

so independently individualist that you attempted to organize them into a conspiracy at the peril of your life.

The main weakness of *Salt of the Earth*, both the movie and its accompanying book, is that it purposely omits the communist message that workers will lose anything they win unless they fight for and win communism. Reformist politics will never free the working class.

Although the book is riddled with rotten politics it does not negate its good points. In addition to the inspiring struggle just to make the film, the book also explains how the film was made, and this is

perhaps the most important thing the modern communist movement can learn from it

The script for the movie was written by Michael Wilson, a blacklisted screenwriter. Wilson read the script to the miners, whose lives were later-portrayed in the film, and they made changes in it to make it true to themselves. For example:

Then he discussed another scene in the treatment. Just before the strike began Ramon, with part of his last pay check, knowing it was to be the last in quite a while, bought a bottle of whiskey. The men had no time to comment on the scene before the women objected. 'Our husbands are not drunkards,' they said. 'That goes out too,' said Mike. 'You see,' he said to us, 'these are perfectly legitimate dramatic scenes and illustrations. In [a] script in which you are after a drama for its own sake, they'd be perfectly able. But we're dealing with something else.'

The miners were also given authority over the shooting of the film. What evolved was film collective, made of professional Hollywood filmmakers and zinc miners. The collective was made up of Black, Latin, Native American and white workers. Biberman acknowledges the leadership given by the mostly non-white miners. Speaking of Mrs. Molano, who plays Mrs. Salazar in the film, he writes:

One day, when I was rather beaten with problems, she came to me and said, "When you feel discouraged in your life afterwards, you come to us. We will always give you courage. Because we always have our backs against the walls, we have never a way to go but forward. We cannot afford to be downhearted. You will finish the picture."

In addition to the story of the struggle to make the film, the book also includes the screenplay, and stills from the movie.

When read with a critical eye—with a willingness to learn from an important struggle by communists of the past, to learn from their mistakes but also from their courage, antiracism, and perseverance—it is an inspiring story.☺

Herbert Biberman. "Salt of the Earth", The Story of a Film. Illustrated edition. Harbor Electronic Publishing, 2003 (originally Beacon Press)

Haiti: President Jovenel Moïse assassinated

In the early hours of July 7, President Jovenel Moïse of Haïti was assassinated. At this time very little is known about the killers or why they took that action. The rumor mill has postulated that it was the U.S. DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) that carried out the killing, with armed agents speaking English and Spanish demanding that Moïse go into exile and when he refused, opened fire. Or maybe it was paid mercenaries by the opposition politicians. What we do think is that this seems to be a dogfight between the pro-government ins and the outs who want their share of the capitalist pie. No good will come of the situation for the workers and students of Haïti, as armed thugs in and out of uniform control the streets and the country remains under martial law. As the New York Times put it, "...the police and security members can enter homes, control traffic and take special security measures and all general measures that permit the arrest of the assassins...It also forbids meetings meant to excite or prepare for disorder."

Moïse was supported fully by the OAS (Organization of American States) and the U.S. imperialists. We also know that Moïse was almost universally hated by the Haïtian masses, who had risen up in the tens of thousands against his regime many times, charging corruption in the PetroCaribe scandal, attempts to rewrite the Constitution to officially cancel the Senate (one of the two houses of Parliament), and to absolve the President of any crimes that may be committed in office, etc. Moïse has also overseen rampant gang violence that is terrorizing the working class and others, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic (there are no vaccines in Haïti and people are sick and dying mostly at home because there is virtually no medical care available).

What we do know is that only last week, well-known anti-Moïse Haitian journalist Diego Charles and activist Antoinette Duclair joined a long list of people who were assassinated for their political views. And finally, what we do know with any certainty is that only by building the revolutionary communist Progressive Labor Party (PLP) can this life that capitalism/imperialism has wrought in Haïti ever be changed. Our Party is struggling with friends and supporters to join us. Now is the time to stand up.

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

Reds ‘showed horror, provided hope’

The following is a letter from a comrade who attended the kickoff of our annual summer project on July 4th. For more details on the summer project, read Page 8.

A historian, a tenant, and a community member were some of the people who spoke with erudition and experience about the reality of living under capitalism and continuously striving for something better in spite of a system designed to exploit and repress.

They showed the horror and yet provided hope from their experiences and knowledge. It was a beautifully powerful example of what communism is and how easy we can make it happen. Even though we have mountains of oppression to overcome, the fire of community shines bright.

★★★★★

Tupelo ‘79: projects teach communist lessons for life

I was one of the participants in the 1979 Tupelo Summer Project described in the July 7 issue of CHALLENGE.

There are so many lessons to draw from any summer project. Here are two that were pivotal in my development as a communist. When Floyd Banks, the leader of our security team, was arrested, he was held on a very high bail. Worse, the judge used the excuse that he was from Texas not Mississippi to order that local residents of Tupelo must post the deed to their homes as bail instead of cash. Having one of the few Black workers in our base who even owned a home take such a risk in the midst of the intense racist and anti-racist struggle that summer required an amazing act of courage.

Robert was a young Black worker who had been drawn to our Project from the very beginning. He was on the march that was attacked. I’ll never forget driving with him to his grandmother’s house to ask her to post the bond. An elderly woman in a wheelchair due to “sugar” (diabetes) she had never met any of us. Robert knelt by her chair asking her to trust him and us. She did it and signed over her home. Their courage taught me the importance of base building and the absolute trust we must earn in the working class.

The other lesson was about the internal development of new leaders that arises in the course of intense class struggle. There were at least 24 members of the Project living in two one-bedroom apartments in Tupelo. We were working intensely, always on the go. But there were stresses developing. A meeting of the Project was called to examine how to correct our work. A quiet college student pointed out that in our busy schedule we had failed to meet in party clubs. We had buried the fight for communism in the reform

struggle. That weakness comes through in the article from the Project in CD. Club leaders were selected and they rose to the occasion. Some of those club leaders are still in the Party today!

The lessons of these Summer Projects remain with us in all our future work.

★★★★★



Red on radio: need for working-class history

I have had some success in explaining communist politics on radio talk shows without being cut short because, I believe, I try to be relevant to the discussion while challenging capitalist politics.

My method of participating is absorbing past comments and ideas and writing down how they relate to present workers’ struggles and communist ideas, much as our comrades do when selling CHALLENGE or talking on the job with workers. This tactic can help us to be prepared with ideas in future discussions.

A recent show featured a history teacher’s discussion about education and I said I’d like to discuss subjects not being taught in history classes. For instance for most of human history people lived in collective, egalitarian communities where everyone was needed and cared for regardless of ability. Why only in the last 10,000 years, in ruling class and capitalist societies, were workers used as slaves, serfs, commodities, exploiters and killers? And was the U.S. Constitution’s main purpose to forever deny any chance of working class power and was racism invented to keep workers divided? Also was the Tulsa Massacre part of a worldwide capitalist attack on revolutionary workers, led by communists during the 1920’s and 30’s?

I concluded that working people need to organize with communists to destroy capitalism and the profit system to create an egalitarian society free of racism, sexism and wars.

★★★★★

Glossary

Communist political terms

Fascism

Capitalism’s response to a crisis of their system, when the bosses can no longer sustain the charade of liberal democracy and resort to more direct control and state terror instead. Fascism is marked by the ruling capitalists disciplining their own ranks to serve the urgent needs of the capitalist state and weather the crisis. To defend their system from internal and external threats, they use all the means available in their state apparatus, including violence. To build unity within their class and loyalty from workers, they rely on nationalist politics and calls for sacrifice. Their strategy is to mislead the working class to kill our working class sisters and brothers in the next inter-imperialist war.

Big Fascists

The Big Fascists are the dominant finance capitalist faction of the U.S. ruling class. They represent the wealthiest and most powerful bosses in the U.S., including multinational banks like Chase and Citibank, multinational oil companies like ExxonMobil, the big automakers, Boeing, Amazon, and the major media companies. As the dominant grouping since World War II, the Big Fascists were the architects of the liberal world order with the U.S. bosses on top. Their dominance rests on U.S. financial and military power and its strategic control of the Middle East and the flow of oil to Europe, Asia, and Africa. To sustain this dominance, they need to rebuild a huge, multiracial military for inter-imperialist war, most likely with China.

Small Fascists

The Small Fascists are a group of domestically oriented U.S. capitalists who are challenging the Big Fascists over the direction of U.S. imperialism. Since their interests are less tied to controlling the flow of oil, they are against heavy taxation to keep troops in the Middle East and in general oppose costly military bases and invasions. They’re willing to rely on a smaller, whiter army, backed by nuclear weapons and the Air Force. They have used open racism to build a political following.

History of Soviet Housing: collectivity, not profit, is the foundation

Continued from page 3

historic Petersburg district, than in a housing complex.

A: Why?

B.: There’s some kind of disconnection; life is more boring. I don’t know, it seems to me that people there are completely different. Everybody is on their own. And here we’re like one big family. If someone is in trouble, it gets shared. Or a joy, you share that too.

Today one person will be in a bad mood, and tomorrow it will be a different person. We somehow neutralize each other, and it works out very well.

A: I see.

B : I like it. I love this apartment. I do. The bathroom has its problems, but we put up with everything. Of course, your own apartment is a good thing, but if I had to choose the lesser of two evils, then this is better.

- Barker and Grant, eds. *The Russia Reader* (Duke UP, 2010), pp. 617-618.

The interviewee describes the benefits of thinking of, living with, and working with the masses.

These communal apartments engendered a sense of collectivity. We can see communist ideas taking shape.

Compromises with capitalism lead to demise

The accelerating compromises with capitalism of the post-Stalin era spelled the death of communism in the USSR. Nikita Krushchev was a Soviet revisionist misleader that ushered this in. This passage from the Wikipedia article "Communal Living in Russia" shows this development:

After Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev's regime embarked upon a mass housing campaign, to eliminate the persistent housing shortages, and create private apartments for urban residents. This campaign was a response to popular demand for "better living conditions, single-family housing, and greater privacy;" Khrushchev believed that granting the people private apartments would give them greater enthusiasm for the communist system in place and that improving people's attitudes and living conditions would lead to a healthier and more productive workforce. However, the new apartments were built quickly, with an emphasis

on quantity over quality, and in underdeveloped neighborhoods, with poor systems of public transportation, making daily life harder for workers. These apartment blocks quickly became called 'khrushchyovka,' a cross between Khrushchev's name and the Russian term for slums.

The lesson here is profound—even the defeat of shortage does not guarantee the victory of communism. Building private apartments instead of collective ones was a step backward for the working class. It promoted individualism and isolation. This led to dealing with problems by yourself (or letting them fester) instead of solving problems collectively. When it comes to building a communist society, we can’t cut corners.

Only the most determined and protracted battle to expand the scope of each worker’s concern so that shortage must be endured wherever workers hold power until profit-induced homelessness (or hunger or oppression) of any worker anywhere has been defeated.☹

PLP’s more complete analysis of how and why communists fell short of this task in the USSR, China, and Cuba are at www.plp.org

Keywords to raise class consciousness

New Jersey, July 6—What’s in a name?” asks Juliet in Shakespeare’s famous play Romeo and Juliet. Well, actually, quite a lot. What you call something has a lot to do with how you think about it.

Some words, like racist or sexist slurs, do not encourage thought but simply harden the dehumanizing psychological categories that enable the bosses to divide and rule. Other words we use, though, can open up new ways of thinking about the world—or, conversely, set limits to our understanding. While a phrase like “great power conflict” obscures the causes of wars, for instance, the word “imperialism” encourages us to analyze the root economic causes of the violence causing mass impoverishment, uprooting, starvation, and murder.

Especially when millions of people, many of them young, are becoming fighters in movements for “social justice,” the vocabulary communists bring to the struggle can play a crucial role in challenging the popular liberal beliefs—vigorously promoted by the main wing of the U.S. ruling class—that often end up tying people to the capitalist system that in many ways they oppose.

Members and friends of Progressive Labor Party, who are active with the Radical Caucus (RC) of the Modern Language Association (MLA), initiated what we’re calling the “Keywords Project.” Our goal is to analyze the potentialities and limitations embedded in terms that are significantly influencing the theory and practice of the emerging generation of worker and student organizers. (This discussion focuses only on words in English; clearly other languages pose issues that are both overlapping and distinct.)

A few of the many terms we are investigating are: “abolition”; “intersectionality”; “racial capitalism”; “white supremacy”; “privilege”—and “social justice” itself. While these and comparable terms are often treated as simply referring to what we all

know, actually they contain many ambiguities and unstated premises. Their meanings are not transparent and self-evident.

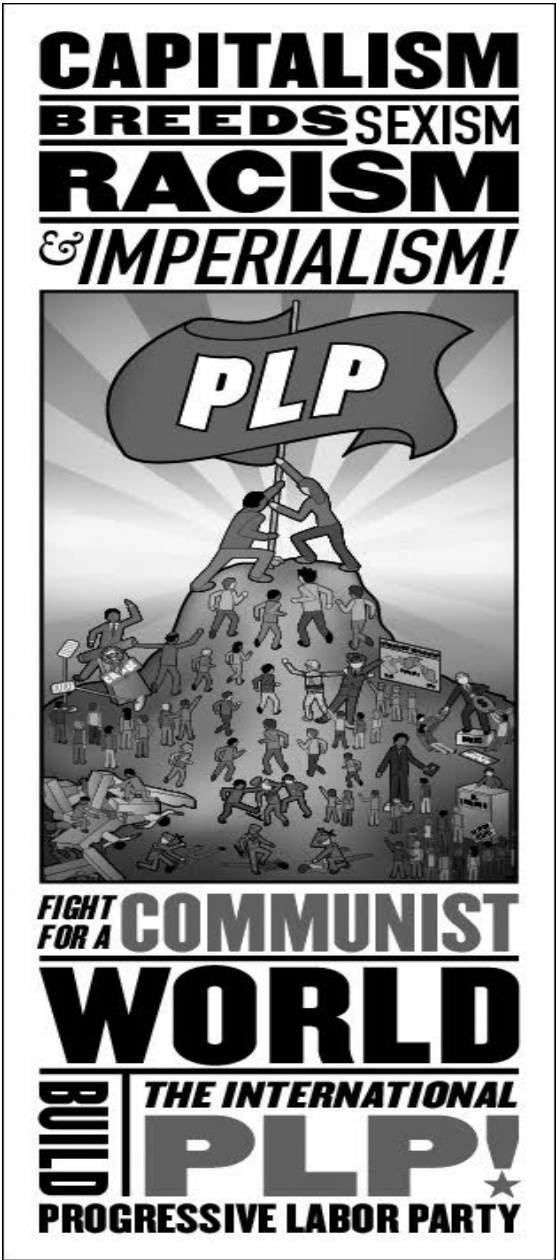
Some currently popular terms, like “abolition,” convey a militant call for change. But...abolish what? Can the system of racist mass incarceration be demolished, for instance, without the corresponding overthrow of the capitalist state? Other terms, like “white supremacy,” target inequality. But this term also implies that whiteness is the source of oppression, and that all white people are oppressors: the foundations of racialized hierarchies in capital’s drive to exploit and divide the working class are obscured.

And can “social justice” be anything but a pipe-dream so long as a small number of the super-rich control governments and economies around the world?

The “Keywords Project” has been conducting a series of reading groups and is aiming at a mini-conference on September 11, as well as a session at the MLA Convention in January 2022. The goal of the project is not to separate language from action, but—through a series of “reports from the field”—to integrate theory with practice.

The RC also plans a series of workshops aimed at training graduate students—currently engaged in a new wave of class-conscious protests—to organize unions and other forms of anti-capitalist activity. The struggle over words is not “academic”; it is vitally important to the shaping and guiding of the class struggle.✪

If you are a reader of CHALLENGE who would like to participate in any of the reading/discussion groups organized by the “Keywords Project”, you are encouraged to get in touch with us by writing to desafio.challenge@gmail.com.



RED EYE ON THE NEWS ...

Abbreviations
NYT= New York Times
GW=Gaurdian Weekly

Medical racism shortens Latin and Black lives

NYT, 6/15 ...The coronavirus has...attacked Latin-Americans in an especially insidious way. They were younger when they died. They are much more likely than white Americans to have died of Covid-19 before age 65, often in the prime of life.... [Californian] Latin-Americans between 20 and 54 were 8.5 times more likely than white Americans in that age range to die of Covid-19....Black and Latin-Americans who die of Covid lose six to seven times as many years of life before the age of 65 as whites do....

“When you die young, you may be a critical breadwinner for your family. You may have dependent children,” [said the director of Harvard’s School of Public Health.]....In San Jose...the extreme wealth of Silicon’s high-tech elite contrasts with poverty and homelessness,...where working families double and triple up under the same roof, paying some of the highest rents in the country....

In Santa Clara County....Latin-Americans...are more likely than white Americans to have jobs that cannot be done remotely are three times as likely as white Americans to be hospitalized with Covid-19 and more than twice as likely to die of it...[and] lack health insurance....

One in five [20 percent] Black and Latin-Americans reported being behind in their rent or mortgage in April, compared with 7.5 percent of white Americans. One in five Black and Latin-American adults in households with children said they did not have enough to eat in the previous week, compared with 6.4 percent of white Americans.

Slave labor built Manhattan’s Broadway

NYT, 6/27 [Book Review: “How the Word is Passed” By Clint Smith] ...“Enslaved workers helped to clear land for construction of Broadway... highlighted by...the site of a former slave market at the corner of Wall Street and Water Street” [in lower Manhattan].

The myth of the ‘good billionaire’

NYT, 6/14 [Warren] Buffett is actually the most dangerous kind of billionaire....the Good Billionaires...who make it seem like the problem is the distortion of the system when, in fact, the problem is the system....[Their] arrangements make it possible for anyone to...keep so much wealth, even as millions of others lack for food, work, housing,... education, [and]dignity.

[Being]...a billionaire in America... [takes] advantage of a system predicated on cruelty, a system whose tax code and labor laws and regulatory apparatus prioritize your needs above most people’s....Good Billionaire Mr. Buffett has profited from Coca-Cola’s sugary drinks, Amazon’s union-busting, Chevron’s oil drilling, Clayton Homes’s predatory loans and...the failure to tax billionaires on their wealth.... A staggering exposé published by ProPublica revealed just how little the biggest plutocrats pay in taxes, despite mounting piles of wealth. And...the cleanest...plutocrat of them all: Mr. Buffett.

ProPublica’s story....served to indict the system that makes him possible....Buffett’s tax payments... are fully legal....Many Americans are beginning to question not only the corruptions of the system but...whether billionaires should exist at all.

Armed resistance erupts in Myanmar

NYT, 6/23 The gunfire in....Mandalay, the second largest city in Myanmar, has been the center

of anti-military resistance since the junta staged a coup on Feb. 1....

The volleys of gunfire marked the first time that clashes erupted in a big city between the military and a newly-formed militia, the People’s Defense Force....“We have started and declared war,” said... a spokesman for the [PDF]....Unexplained bombings targeting...local government offices or military-linked businesses, have proliferated across the country....

The People’s Defense Force urged...residents to burn tires on the roads to slow the arrival of armored vehicles....The People’s Defense Force has been receiving military training in...remote forests, recruits are seen marching with rifles....

Hundreds of soldiers have been killed in fighting since the coup....Armed ethnic groups...have provided jungle training to doctors, massage therapists, engineers,...and thousands of others who have left the cities to join the armed resistance.

Only 28 percent of unemployed workers get jobless benefits

NYT, 6/1 The legacy of the racism that infected...the New Deal...is particularly bitter for Black workers.... During the last recession, only 23.8 percent of unemployed Black workers received benefits compared to 33.2 percent of white workers....

The unemployment safety net was designed with racist intent....The federal government has allowed states to chop away at unemployment benefits, driving desperation up and wages down. Nationwide, the share of jobless workers who... [received] benefits fell from 44 percent in 1980 to about 28 percent in 2019....

The average amount that workers got relative to prior wages, has also been in steady decline.

NEWARK SUMMER PROJECT

IGNITE HEAT IN NEW COMMUNISTS



Newark, NJ, July 4—Fifty Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members and friends collectively kicked off this year's Summer Project by sharing food, speeches and international solidarity. The goal was to sharpen the fight against racism, sexism and nationalism as we organize for communist revolution - working class power. One participant commented that as communists, "we make a commitment to free ourselves from capital and invest our lives into the international working class."

At each summer project like this one, workers from around the world put communism into action in one central location of struggle. With an ongoing pandemic, we are raising working class consciousness about how fascism, or excessive state control and police terror is rampant in Newark. To smash this, we need to build an internationalist communist party with Black, white, Latin, Asian and Arab workers leading the way toward a world where the needs of all workers are put first.

History of Newark

Three newer and two veteran comrades gave speeches about the history of Newark and how the education, housing and court system is impacted by racism. The first speech discussed the importance of recognizing Newark as a laboratory for Big Fascists (see Glossary, p. 6) to operate on a local scale under Mayor Ras Baraka. Praised as a "progressive" and "revolutionary" the Mayor has promoted reforms like Universal Basic Income, a worker-led review board of the police and temporarily fixed lead-poisoned water pipes. But in fact, he's in line with what the Big Fascists are pushing worldwide. They want to throw a few crumbs or fake reforms to the working class to win us to support the finance capitalists' plans for imperialist war against China and Russia. As we fight against racist police killings and for better housing conditions, PLP wants workers to see through the lies of the Big Fascists in Newark and worldwide to fight for a communist world.

In the United States, particularly during the 60s, the U.S. bosses were faced with hundreds of rebellions led by Black workers fighting against their racist conditions. As a result the bosses began to experiment with using Black politicians to control the masses. Ken Gibson was elected Newark's first Black mayor in 1970. The speaker went on to say that the "Main legacy of the civil rights

movement and those riots, where Black workers rose up against police brutality, is that Black politicians came into office and betrayed the workers." Big Fascist politicians like Baraka ultimately steer workers away from fightback and into the ballot box, while smashing any revolutionary potential amongst the working class.

Another speaker talked about the history of the education struggle in Newark. Schools here "continue the legacy of molding children into compliant workers." At the same time segregation in Newark contributes to the racist conditions in the schools. However, this does not mean there was no fightback. The Newark Teachers' strike in 1970-1971, the student-led fightbacks for better curriculum and school conditions of the 80s and 90s, and the fightback in 2015 to get rid of Superintendent Cami Anderson and State control of Newark schools all provided valuable lessons for our Party.

The final speech addressed public housing in Newark. Like many cities, Newark saw a rise of public housing during the 1930s New Deal era. Then a decline in funding started in the 1960s. The speaker talked about the courageous tenants of the Stella Wright Housing Project who conducted a four year rent strike (1970-1974) against racist housing conditions that persisted for over a decade. But what was most powerful was her own experience of living in public housing and committing to fight for communism because of the strike. She had moved to a number of different housing projects throughout the city as one shut down after another. On top of the inhumane living conditions, many of those in public housing during Covid-19 had to deal with constant police surveillance, day and night. Despite these conditions, many residents who are on disability and rely on this housing are afraid to

speak out. This even with the city's possible gentrification plans for this housing project. She then stated, "And Ras [Baraka] is on this trip that if you want to get rid of gentrification, then buy a house - but that's not possible for us." But PLP is continuing to organize and talk to residents so that they have the confidence through collective action to fight for what we all deserve.

As the cookout was wrapping up the Rodwell/Spivey family and a local organizer arrived. The lawyer for the family spoke about the case and how these young men were racially profiled and attacked by the cops. Then another local organizer, who has been leading the fight back in this struggle, spoke about his attempts to organize support around the family and how PLP was the only organization to respond. "After I saw the video and news headlines I visited the family myself. When I heard the real story I called every organization in the city. Nobody called me back except for PLP. And the next day at the rally they came out." That's what we do. In this period it is important for us to take a patient long term approach when organizing workers and students, but it is also necessary to act with urgency when situations like these arise. The mother of the young men also spoke about how the cops have been harassing the family by parking a mobile precinct on the street and checking IDs of those coming in and out of the neighborhood. After she spoke we passed around a hat to raise funds for the family's legal defense fund.

Just as Big Facist liberal bosses like Ras Baraka build a base for capitalism, PLP is building a base for communism. It was evident when one woman who attended and was alive in the 60s commented that when she was growing up in Jersey City, she never would have seen a multiracial, intergenerational group. Communist organizing was also clear in the way that members collectively produced the speeches.

As essential as it is for the 20 percent of non-english speakers at the opening event to listen to Black and white workers in the fight against racism and leading communism, as we move forward with our activities it's equally as important for us to struggle with mainly English-speaking workers to experience live translation as a form of anti-racist internationalism. Practices like these smash the uneven divisions bosses flame to keep the most useful ideas for our class scattered.

What's ahead

Over the next few weeks this PLP Summer Project will continue to build upon the barbeque through CHALLENGE distributions around the city, and study groups on topics like political economy, displacement, nationalism, and racism. We will end our project with a rally and a motorcade connecting the various struggles that the working class in this part of the world is currently involved in. We plan to maintain the common feeling of strong solidarity and joy felt throughout, as a way to strengthen the bonds among members and friends of PLP. Contact PLP if you would like to join us during this Summer Project. ☘

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